

Voyageurs National Park

Rendezvous
AT VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK

Living with Black Bears

Approximately 150 black bears live in Voyageurs National Park. These bears symbolize the wilderness quality of northern Minnesota and can be a memorable wildlife observation. Unfortunately, each summer numerous human-bear incidents occur. While human injuries are rare, black bears can cause significant property damage. Incidents often result in campsite closures and the trapping and relocation of bears.

Voyageurs National Park tries to provide an environment where bears can live with minimal human interference. Please do your part. Help prevent bear problems by following the procedures in this brochure. Report human-bear incidents to park personnel as soon as possible.

VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK

KABETOOGAMA LAKE
VISITOR CENTER
(218) 875-2111

ASH RIVER VISITOR CENTER
(218) 374-3221

RAINY LAKE VISITOR CENTER
(218) 286-5258

CRANE LAKE
(218) 993-2481



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

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NATURAL HISTORY

Black bears (*Ursus americanus*) are the smallest yet most abundant bear on the North American continent. The only bear found in Minnesota, they are quite



CINNAMON COLORED
BLACK BEAR.

common in the wooded northern part of the state. Typically black in color, they can also be brown or cinnamon colored. Adult male black bears are much larger than the females and weigh 250-300 lbs. and are 4-6' standing height on hind legs. Black bears have prominent ears, glossy coats and lack the shoulder hump characteristic of the grizzly bear. They are excellent swimmers and tree climbers. Black bears can live for 20 years in the wild.

FEEDING HABITS

Black bears are opportunistic omnivores, feeding primarily on vegetation, such as berries, seeds, grasses and forbs. Insects, fish and carrion are their source of protein. They travel great distances constantly in search of opportunities to feed their young and build fat for their long winter hibernation.

History and Facts

Considering their nature and extremely acute senses, it is not surprising that they are often attracted to human food sources — like garbage and camper's picnics!



BLACK BEAR FEASTING
ON LUSCIOUS BERRIES.

Wild bears are naturally afraid of humans. They lose this fear when they learn to associate humans with food. Food and garbage odors attract bears to campsites, picnic areas, cabins and even boats and cars.

Once habituated, bears become threats to people, property, and themselves. They alter their behavior and can be seen pan handling along roadsides, where they may be hit by cars, or begin seeking food in the day by raiding campsites. Bears can become such a nuisance they have to be trapped and relocated or in some cases killed by resource managers.

The solution is prevention. Help bears keep their fear of humans and stay alive by changing your habits.



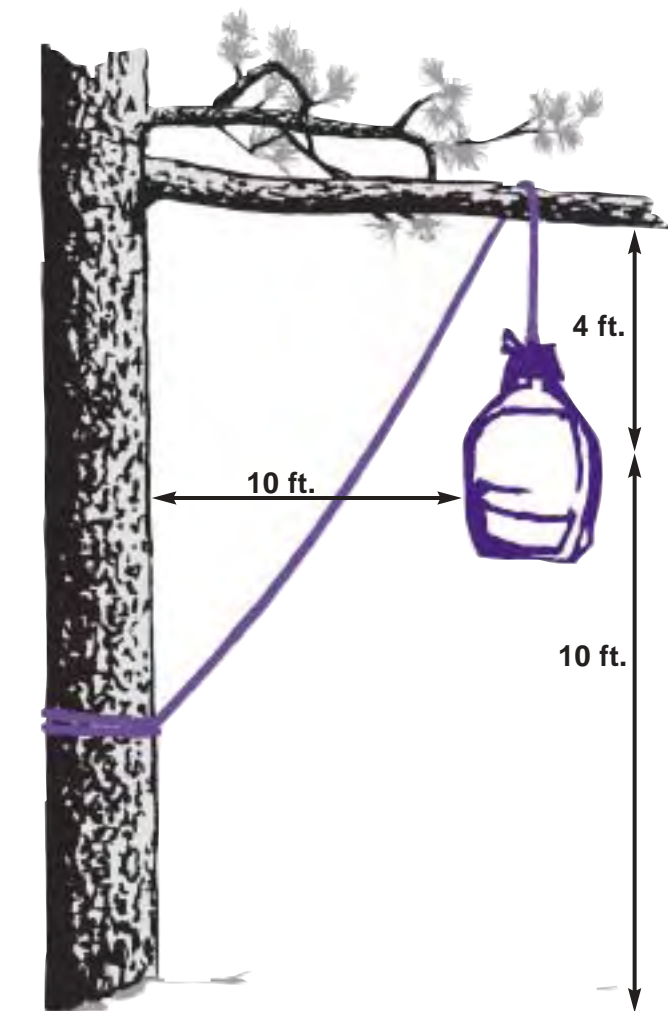
BLACK BEARS ARE EXCELLENT SWIMMERS.

Living with Black Bears

PREVENTING PROBLEMS

When camping:

- Food must be properly stored in a park bear-proof food locker or hung ten feet from the ground and four feet from a tree. Bear-proof food lockers hold two standard coolers.
- Put in a bear-proof locker or hang anything



BLACK BEARS GET THEIR PROTEIN BY EATING INSECTS SUCH AS ANTS, HORNETS, AND ANIMAL MATTER.

that has an odor (toothpaste, bug repellent, soap, garbage, etc.).

- Store or hang items that a bear might think is food, such as fuel containers and water jugs.
- Cook food away from your tent. Food odors on a tent may attract a bear.
- Clothes worn while cooking foods with strong odors should be stored or hung away from tent.
- Store or hang all garbage, including shore lunch grease, empty cans and jars, aluminum foil and plastic wrap.
- Pack out your garbage when you leave; don't bury it.
- Dispose of fish entrails in deep water.
- Keep a clean site. Pick up food scraps and wipe off picnic tables.
- Don't camp at a site with recent bear sign. Report garbage-strewn sites to a ranger.
- If a bear approaches your site, do not feed it. Frighten the bear by yelling, banging pans together or throwing rocks or sticks. Make sure the bear has an escape route. If the bear is persistent, pack up your food and trash and retreat slowly to a secure area.
- Report all human-bear incidents at a park visitor center.

When boating:

- Houseboaters should store food and garbage inside.
- Remember:* Bears are excellent swimmers and "island hop" in search of food.
- Do not feed bears or any wildlife.
- Dispose of fish entrails in deep water.
- Pack out shore lunch grease in an old coffee can.

When at the cabin or staying at a resort:

- Keep coolers inside a vehicle or hard-sided camper and out of sight and smell.
- Dispose of garbage in bear-proof dumpsters.
- Do not leave food as bait for any animals or leave food scraps on the ground.
- Keep pet food inside.
- Keep grills and picnic tables clean.
- If a bear approaches, attempt to scare it away. If it persists, move food and people inside a vehicle or cabin.



BLACK BEAR "BLUFF CHARGING."

- Report human-bear incidents to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), resort owner or park ranger.

Any time you see a bear:

- Do not ever feed it. The next visitor may be a three-year-old with a jelly sandwich.
- Change your direction, do not approach a bear. If it changes its natural behavior, woofs, snaps its jaws or slaps the ground, you are too close. Retreat slowly.
- Always leave an escape route for the bear.
- Never surround or corner a bear.
- Never run from a bear.
- Playing dead is not appropriate for black bear attacks. If a bear approaches you, act with mild aggression; yell and wave your arms. In the extremely rare case of a black bear attack, fight back using whatever is available.

BEAR BEHAVIOR

A bear is checking you out when...

- it stands on its hind legs to get a better look;
- it waves its nose in the air to catch your smell;
- it gives low, non-aggressive grunting sounds.

A bear is getting upset when...

- it clacks its teeth;
- it gives an explosive blowing sound.

A bear is telling you to move away when it...

- blows loudly;
- makes short lunges and slaps the ground or an object;
- gives bluff charges that stop short of you.

***Bluff charges and loud blowing
are clear messages
for you to leave the area.***